

EARLY ART-SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND.

Charles the First appears to have been the first English Sovereign who regarded art not merely as an appendage to the throne, but loved it for its own sake. As Walpole says, "Queen Elizabeth was avaricious with pomp, James I. lavish with meanness." To neither had the position of the painter been a matter of the slightest concern. But from Charles the First dates truly the dawn of a love of art in England, the proper valuing of the artist-mind, and the first introduction into the country of the greatest works of the continental masters.

At the present day a complaint is constantly arising, that artists are found to be deficient in general education, while what may be called for distinction's sake the educated classes are singularly wanting in artistic knowledge. The Universities do not teach art; the Art-schools do not teach anything else. As a result, speaking generally, the painters are without mental culture, the patrons are without art-acquirements. (This supposes the patrons to be of the upper classes; but of course at the present time a large share of art-patronage comes from the rich middle or manufacturing classes, whose uninformed tastes are even less likely to tend to the due appraisal and elevation of art.) Mr. Ruskin, giving evidence before the commissioners inquiring into the position of the Royal Academy (1863), says, "The want of education on the part of the upper classes in art, has been very much at the bottom of the abuses which have crept into all systems of education connected with it. If the upper classes could only be interested in it by being

led into it when young, a great improvement might be looked for;" and the witness goes on to urge the expediency of appointing professors of art at the Universities. Upon the question of infusing a lay-element into the Royal Academy by the addition of non-professional academicians, Mr. Ruskin takes occasion to observe: — "I think if you educate our upper classes to take more interest in art, which implies of course to know something about it, they might be most efficient members of the Academy; but if you leave them, as you leave them now, to the education which they get at Oxford and Cambridge, and give them the sort of scorn which all the teaching there tends to give of art and artists, the less they have to do with an Academy of Art the better."

It is somewhat curious after this to consider an attempt made by King Charles the First, in the eleventh year of his reign, to supply these admitted deficiencies of University instruction: to found an Academy in which general and fine-art education should be combined.

A committee, consisting of the Duke of Buckingham and others, had been appointed in the House of Lords for taking into consideration the state of the public schools, and their method of education. What progress was made by this committee is not known. One result of its labours, however, was probably the establishment of the Musœum Minerva, under letters patent from the king, at a house which Sir Francis Kynaston had purchased, in Covent Garden, and furnished as an Academy. This was appropriated for ever as a college for the education of nobles and gentlemen, to be governed by a regent and professors, chosen by

"balloting-box," who were made a body corporate, permitted to use a common seal, and to possess goods and lands in mortmain. Sir Francis, who styled himself Corporis Armiger, and who had printed in 1635 a translation into Latin verse of Chaucer's "Troilus and Cressida," was nominated the first regent of the Academy, and published in 1636 its constitution and rules, addressed "to the noble and generous well wishers to vertuous actions and learning." The Academy — "justified and approved by the wisdom of the King's most sacred Majesty and many of the lords of his Majesty's most honourable privy council" — its constitution and discipline being ratified under the hands and seals of the Right Honourable the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England and the two Lord Chief Justices — professed to be founded "according to the laudable customs of other nations," and for "the bringing of virtue into action and the theory of liberal arts into more frequent practice." Its aims were directed to the end that England might be as well furnished for the virtuous education and discipline of her own natives as any other nation of Europe; it being "sufficiently known that the subjects of his Majesty's dominions have naturally as noble minds and as able bodies as any nation of the earth, and therefore deserve all accommodation for the advancing of them, either in speculation or action." It was considered that a peculiar institution was required for teaching those "most useful accomplishments of a gentleman" — the sciences of navigation, riding, fortification, architecture, painting, &c., which, if taught, were yet not practised in the universities or courts of law. Many of these sciences, it was admitted, were taught in London, "in dispersed places;" but it was convenient to reduce and unite them in one certain place, and not to teach them perfunctorily and rather

for gain than for any other respect— desirable, too, that youth should have, in a virtuous society, generous and fitting recreations as might divert them from too much frequenting places of expense and of greater inconvenience. The intention of the Academy was also to benefit gentlemen going abroad, by giving them language and instruction, with other ornaments of travel. "There is no understanding man," says the prospectus or advertisement of the institution, "but may resent how many of our noblemen and young gentlemen travel into foreign countries before they have any language or knowledge to make profit of their time abroad, they not being any way able to get knowledge for want of language, nor language for want of time; since going over so young, their years of license commonly expire before they can obtain to sufficient ripeness of understanding; which no nation is known to do but the English: for what children of other nations come over to us before they are of able age and ripeness?" Another inconvenience arising from the want of the Musœum Minerva was stated to be the necessity many gentlemen were under of sending their sons beyond seas for their education, "where, through change of climate and dyat, and for want of years of discretion, they become more subject to sickness and immature death."

It was required of gentlemen admitted into the Musœum that they should pay fees of at least £5 each, and should bring a testimonial of their arms and gentry, and their coat armour, "tricked on a table, to be conserved in the museum." There was to be a Liber Nobilium always kept, in which benefactors and their benefits were to be recorded, beginning with King Charles, "our first and royal benefactor;" and it was provided that if any gentleman should have

any natural experiment or secret, and should communicate it to the Musœum and upon trial it should be found true and good, his name and experiment should be recorded in Liber Nobilium for a perpetual honour to him.

The regent was required to instruct personally, or to superintend instruction in "heraldry, blazon of coates and armes, practical knowledge of deedes, and evidences, principles and processes of common law, knowledge of antiquities, coynes, medalls, husbandry," &c. The Doctor of Philosophy and Physic was to read and profess physiology, anatomy, or any other parts of physic. The Professor of Astronomy was to teach astronomy, optics, navigation, and cosmography. Instruction in arithmetic, analytical algebra, geometry, fortification, and architecture, was to be given by the Professor of Geometry. A Professor of Music was to impart skill in singing, and music to play upon organ, lute, viol, &c. Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, and High Dutch were to be taught by the Professor of Languages. In addition, a Professor of Defence inculcated skill at all weapons and wrestling (but not pugilism apparently), and ample instruction was to be afforded in riding, dancing and behaviour, painting, sculpture, and writing. A preparatory school was also to be annexed for the young gentlemen whose parents were desirous of having them brought up in the Musœum from their first years. Finally, it was expressly provided that no degrees were to be given, and the academy was not to be conceived in any way prejudicial "to the Universities and Inns of Court, whose foundations have so long and so honourably been confirmed."

For no long time did the Musœum Minerva flourish. The King's troubles began; and in the storms of civil war the Academy for teaching the upper classes science and the fine arts, manners and accomplishments, fell to the ground and disappeared utterly. So bitter and inveterate was the feeling against the King that, as Walpole says (and Walpole, be it remembered, cherished no reverence for Charles the First —quite otherwise,— under a fac simile of the warrant for the King's execution, he wrote "Magna Charta and he often found pleasure in considering the monarch's fall), "it seems to have become part of the religion of the time to war on the arts because they had been countenanced at Court." So early as 1645, the Parliament had begun to sell the pictures at York House. On the 23rd July in that year votes were passed ordering the sale, for the benefit of Ireland and the North, of all such pictures at York House "as were without any superstition." Pictures containing representations of the Second Person in the Trinity, or of the Virgin Mary, were judged to be superstitious, and ordered to be burnt forthwith. Immediately after the King's death, votes were passed for the sale of all his pictures, statues, jewels, hangings, and goods. Cromwell, however, on his obtaining sole power, made some effort to stay the terrible sacrifice that was being made of the royal collections.

There was thus an end of King Charles's Musœum Minervae. Yet, if not absolutely founded on its ruins, at any rate in some measure following its example, we soon find record of the rise of a similar institution. One Sir Balthazar Gerbier, without Government aid or countenance, but acting entirely on his own responsibility, had opened an Academy "on Bednallgreen without Aldgate." This was

probably in the year 1649.



Sir Balthazar Gerbier, architect and painter, "excellent in either branch," says a biographer, had led a somewhat curious life. In a pamphlet published in Paris, in 1646, addressed "to all men that loves Truth," — singularly rich, thanks to the French printers, in blunders, orthographic and grammatical, — Sir Balthazar gives some account of his family and himself. He was born about 1591, at Middelbourg in Zetland, the son of Anthoine Gerbier, a baron of Normandy, and Radegonde, daughter-in-law to the Lord of Blavet

in Picardy. "It pleaseth God," writes Sir Balthazar, "to suffer my parents to fly the bluddy persecutions in France, against those which the Roman Catholics call the Huguenots. My said parents left and lost all for that cause." He came to England when about twenty-one, and entered the service of George Villiers, "newly become favourite to King James, being immediately after Baron, Viscount, Earle, and afterwards created Marquis and Duke of Buckingham." He accompanied Buckingham to Spain, and was employed in the famous treaty of marriage, though ostensibly acting only as a painter. While in Spain he executed a miniature portrait of the Infanta, which was sent over to King James. The Duchess of Buckingham wrote to her husband in Spain, "I pray you, if you have any idle time, sit to Gerbier for your picture, that I may have it well done in time." After the accession of Charles, it appears that Gerbier was employed in Flanders to negotiate privately a treaty with Spain, in which Rubens was commissioned to act on the part of the Infanta; the business ultimately bringing the great painter to England. In 1628, Gerbier was knighted at Hampton Court, and, according to his own account, was promised by King Charles the office of Surveyor-General of the works after the death of Inigo Jones. In 1637, he was employed at Brussels in some private state negotiation with the Duke of Orleans, the French King's brother, and in 1641, he obtained a bill of naturalization, and took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, According to Vertue, he was much hated and persecuted by the anti-monarchic party, for his loyalty and fidelity to the King and his son. At the sale of the royal collection, he made purchases to the amount of £350. The suspension of all art-patronage during the Commonwealth, probably necessitated the establishment of his Academy at Bethnal

Green, as a means of obtaining a livelihood. Painters did not flourish very much under the rule of the Puritans.

A fly-sheet, undated, which may be found in the British Museum, sets forth the plan of Gerbier's Academy. He addresses himself "to all Fathers of Noble Families and Lovers of Vertue," desires public notice of his great labours and exertions, and informs the world that "the chiefe Famous Forraigne Languages, Sciences and Noble Exercises" are taught in his establishment. "All Lovers of Vertue " of what age soever, are received and instructed, and each of them may select such studies, exercises, and sciences, as are most consonant to his genius. Public lectures are announced to be read gratis every Wednesday afternoon, in the summer at three, in the winter at two o'clock. A competent number of children of "decayed families " are taught without fee. "Lovers of Vertue" are stated to be thus freed from the dangers and inconveniences incident to travellers, who repair to foreign parts to improve themselves, and leave the honour of their education to strangers, running "the hazzard of being shaken in the fundamental points of their religion, and their innate loyalty to their native country." The nation is therefore exhorted to reflect seriously on Sir Balthazar's proffers; to embrace them vigorously and constantly to countenance and promote them, "since that the languages declared to be taught in the academy are: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, High Dutch, and Low Dutch, both Ancient and Modern Histories, jointly with the Constitutions and Governments of the most famous Empires and Dominions in the World, the true Natural and Experimental Philosophy, the Mathematicks, Arithmetic and the Keeping of Bookes of Accounts by Debitor and Creditor, all

Excellent Handwriting, Geometry, Cosmography, Geography, Perspective, Architecture, Secret Motions of Scenes, Fortifications, the Besieging and Defending of Places, Fireworks, Marches of Armies, Ordering of Battailes, Fencing, Vaulting, Riding the Great Horse, Music, Playing on all sorts of Instruments, Dancing, Drawing, Painting, Limning, and Carving, &c." Certainly Sir Balthazar's was a sufficient catalogue of arts, sciences, and accomplishments. The lectures 'composed for the good of the public' were afterwards printed, and to be obtained at Robert Ibbitson's house in Smithfield, near Hosier Lane. It may be noted that a lecture upon the art of well-speaking, brought upon the lecturer the derision of Butler, author of "Hudibras."

In the winter the Academy was moved from Bethnal Green to Whitefriars. Sir Balthazar issued advertisements as to his lectures. It is to be feared his good intentions were not always appreciated by the public of the day. In one of his advertisements we find him complaining bitterly of "the extraordinary concourse of unruly people who robbed him, and treated with savage rudeness his extraordinary services." Something of a visionary, too, was Sir Balthazar; —yet, with all his vanity as to his own merits— his coxcombry about his proceedings, — a sort of reformer and benefactor, too, in a small way. At one time we find him advertising that, besides lecturing gratis, he will lend from one shilling to six, gratis, "to such as are in extreme need, and have not wherewithal to endeavour their subsistence, whereas week by week they may drive on some trade." By-and-by, however, Sir Balthazar was probably more disposed to borrow than to lend. His Academy met with little support— with ridicule rather than encouragement; was

indeed a total failure; and he left England for America. For some years nothing was heard of him.

In 1660, however, we find him publishing at Rotterdam "a sommary description, manifesting that greater profits are to be done in the hott than in the cold parts of America." This contains an account of his journey with his family to settle at Surinam. But there, it seems, he was seized by the Dutch, treated with much violence, one of his children being killed, and brought to Holland. He attempted, but in vain, to obtain redress from the States for this strange treatment of him. He probably returned to England with Charles II., for he is said to have aided in designing the triumphal arches erected at the Restoration.

Gerbier's name is attached to a long list of books and pamphlets. Some of these are of a controversial character; the author was a stout Huguenot, fond of denouncing the Pope; oftentimes alarmed at plots against himself on account of his religion, and now publishing a letter of remonstrance to his three daughters who, in opposition to his will, had entered a nunnery in Paris. Other works relate to architecture and fortifications, the languages, arts, and noble exercises taught in his Academy, or contain advice to travellers, or deal with political affairs. Mr. Pepys records in his diary, under date the 28th May, 1663: "At the Coffee House in Exchange Alley I bought a little book, 'Counsell to Builders,' by Sir Balth. Gerbier. It is dedicated almost to all the men of any great condition in England, so that the dedications are more than the book itself; and both it and them," the diarist adds somewhat severely, "not worth a farthing!" Sir Balthazar died in 1667, at

Hempsted Marshall House, which he had himself designed, the seat of Lord Craven, and was buried in the chancel of the adjoining church. Portraits of Gerbier were painted by Dobson —the picture was sold for £44 at the sale of Betterton the actor— and by Vandyke. The work by Vandyke also contained portraits of Gerbier's family, and was purchased in Holland by command of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and brought to Leicester House.

For something like half-a-century after Sir Balthazar Gerbier's time we find no trace of another Art Academy in England.

Dutton Cook.

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